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Meeting Notes

Attendees:	See Attached List	Date/Time:	March 29, 2001/6:00 PM
		Project No.:	50885
Place:	Fisk School Salem, New Hampshire	Re:	Advisory Task Force Meeting
		Notes taken by:	Bruce A. Tasker

Dean Kacos, representing the Advisory Task Force, opened the meeting and explained that this meeting would include a discussion of the engineering concepts between the Massachusetts State line and Exit 2.

Jeff Brillhart presented the Project Status:

Since the last Task Force meeting on November 9, there have been meetings with all five towns along the corridor to discuss the recommendations being carried forward into the Draft Environmental and Impact Statement (DEIS). The Rationale Report was completed and distributed this past January. This report identifies alternatives that will be carried forward for the study in the DEIS. The Rationale Report is the second project report directly related to the development of the DEIS. The first report was the Scoping Report. It was published in May 2000 and provides a broad overview of project issues and potential alternatives. A third report, the Rail Alternative Study, was developed and distributed in November 2000. This documents a feasibility study looking at issues associated with three rail alternatives that might serve the region currently served by I-93.

During the past couple of months, the Department has held several meetings with the State and Federal Environmental Resource Agencies to discuss the project in detail. Additional meetings have also been held as part of Senator Smith's streamlining initiatives in trying to bring the Resource Agencies, the NHDOT and Federal Highway Administration together to work out issues in a collaborative effort, so that at the end of this EIS process, the necessary permits can be obtained.

Although the Agencies recognize the need for widening I-93, the EPA and the NHDES have expressed the opinion that an in-depth rail study needs to be done so that in the future rail can readily become a part of the region's transportation system. The NHDOT's studies indicate that from a highway perspective, widening the highway is not going to address the transportation needs of the region without some assistance in the future. In fact, by the year 2020, the section south of Exit 1 will need additional widening if the current widening is four lanes or less in each

direction. This issue of rail transportation is one of the major issues of this project and will be throughout the study process.

The second issue of major concern for the Resource Agencies is Secondary Impacts. There is concern that if the highway is widened and mobility improved, people will be encouraged to move to NH causing more development to occur in NH. The concern is that this growth will result in impacts to other environmental resources. The NHDOT is working with the EPA and FHWA to come up with a method to evaluate secondary impacts. It has been agreed to try the DELPHI or Expert Panel methodology. Essentially, the methodology uses a panel of selected individuals, who are considered experts in the field of land use. For this project the panel would be made up of people in the real estate business, development business, perhaps bankers and university experts that are knowledgeable in land use and transportation. This group of experts would provide their insight as to what they think will happen if I-93 is, or is not, widened.

The panel would be given some information about current trends and demographics, and then be asked a couple of questions to answer as to what they think will happen in the future given various transportation scenarios. Each panelist would answer the questions individually and independently of the other panelists. The Department's consultant would collect that information, catalog it and give the information back to all of the panelists so they can see how the other panelists answered the questions. Each panelist would then be asked to reconsider their original answer (causing some of them to change their minds, adjust their answers, or restate their answers). The intent is to go through the process a couple of times to come up with a consensus of the future or a range of possibilities if the highway is widened.

This methodology is a relatively new way to look at secondary impacts. It is somewhat experimental. It has been tried previously for two planning study projects in the State of Washington and the State of Texas and is currently being tried in Maryland. Although there is uncertainty as to the turnout, it should be an interesting experience and the Department is hopeful that the discussion alone will pique the public's interest resulting in feedback from the citizens of New Hampshire as to what the future might hold.

The NHDOT has also met with Massachusetts's officials on several occasions to discuss this project and learn what is being done in Massachusetts relative to the I-93 corridor. Massachusetts is currently doing an independent study on I-93 that involves an 11-mile section of I-93 in Methuen and Andover. This section of I-93 is currently three lanes in each direction. During the peak travel periods in the mornings and afternoons, the shoulders are used to make four lanes in each direction. This is a short-term solution until a long-term transportation solution is identified.

The NHDOT has also worked with the Town of Salem to try and resolve issues related to the existing prime wetlands adjacent to the highway. The Town of Salem has recently voted to change some of the prime designations of wetlands in some areas that are adjacent to the highway. This should help the Department in getting permits. Obviously, wetlands need to be avoided as much as possible and impacts minimized. Where impacts can not be avoided, mitigation needs to be provided. The Department has discussed mitigation with the Town of Salem and a number of areas are under consideration. The areas include the construction of a mitigation site this summer off Pelham Road, a site that was purchased a number of years ago for a park and ride lot on the south side of Rockingham Park Boulevard, and a third site that involves the abandoned Salem Sewerage Treatment Plant, whereby the buildings and infrastructure of the sewerage treatment plant would be removed and the land redeveloped as wetlands and floodplain.

Relative to the recommendations in the Rationale Report. The Rationale Report suggests studying the widening of I-93 to three lanes in each direction the entire length of corridor, widening I-93 to four lanes in each direction the entire length of corridor, and also studying a combination of widening I-93 to four lanes in each direction from the Stateline to Exit 3 and then three lanes in each direction from Exit 3 north. The Rationale Report also proposes the construction of park and ride lots at Exits 2, 3 and 5 as well as continuing the park and ride lot at Exit 4. It is also being proposed that for any of these widening alternatives the existing bus service to Boston be expanded by adding bus service from all park and ride lots. The report also suggests the bus service be enhanced by having bus service from the park and ride lots down to the employment centers in Massachusetts. There is currently a project that Massachusetts has taken the lead on to provide bus service from Exit 4 down to the River Road area in MA. The Rationale Report also suggests the need to implement the Intelligent Transportation System's technology along the highway (such as variable message boards, highway advisory radio, etc.), and to improve upon our incident management capabilities. Incident management is related to how accidents are dealt with along the highway. The NHDOT is working with the State Police, the Federal Highway Administration, and local safety officials to improve upon how incidents are managed so as to reduce congestion and to improve safety. The Rationale Report also recommends that the NHDOT look at short term localized fixes known as Transportation Systems Management (TSM) improvements, which would be temporary fixes to improve safety and improve capacity to some degree at specific locations along the highway.

The Rationale Report also suggests that High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes should not be constructed as part of this project. Implementing HOV lanes will not address the needs of the highway as there will not be enough users in those lanes to warrant building and maintaining those lanes. The only area that perhaps would warrant consideration of HOV lanes would be south of Exit 1. Constructing an HOV lane in NH would be dependant upon Massachusetts having an HOV lane. If Massachusetts were to build an HOV lane, then perhaps an HOV lane would be given more thought, but based on our evaluation, the number of riders that would use an HOV lane would be low, and people would feel the lane was underutilized.

The Rationale Report also proposed that train service not be pursued as part of this study. Train service does not generate enough ridership to make a real difference in how the highway operates within the next 20 years. That is not to say that train service will not play a role in the future, and for that reason, it is proposed to include space for the possibility of train service along the I-93 corridor with all widening alternatives.

Jeff then explained the presentation for the meeting. He noted that the plans depict the highway improvements if the highway is widened to three or four lanes in each direction, and if Exits 1 and 2 are rebuilt. This type of presentation will be held in all five towns. The idea is to develop the widening plans with enough detail so people can get a sense as to what the impacts would be to their own properties and to their community.

Jeff noted that the plans appear to be very detailed, however, they are not finalized and they are subject to change.

Presentation of the Plans was given by Tony Grande.

Tony Grande briefly described the plans. He noted that the plans consist of 200 scale plans for the 3 and 4-lane concepts from the MA line to Exit 2 and 100 scale plans of the two interchange options for each interchange.

Two separate widening plans were developed (although they look generally the same given the scale), with one plan representing a 3-lane scenario and the second representing a 4-lane scenario.

Tony described the typical roadway cross section, which for the 4-lane option includes four 12' travel lanes and a 12' wide shoulder on the outside. On the inside there is space for 12' wide shoulder and in additional 6' to allow room to accommodate an HOV lane, if appropriate in the future or room to make minor modifications to the design as it proceeds to the next level. Tony noted that space (ranging from 60' to 90') for a potential future rail line is also being reserved.

MA line to Exit 1 - NB

Beginning at the southern end of the project, the eastern edge of pavement was held as a control through the majority of this section. The widening is towards the median for the NB barrel and to the west for the SB barrel, to minimize impacts to Policy Brook. The mainline concept has been extended south of the MA line to introduce a fourth lane in the NB direction at the Route 213 NB on-ramp. Near the MA/NH border an auxiliary lane is added to transition to a 5-lane section for a short distance until the introduction of a 2-lane collector-distributor (C/D) road for traffic wishing to use the rest area or the Exit 1 NB Off ramp. The median width between the NB mainline barrel and the C/D road is 20 feet. Traffic leaving the Rest Area wishing to get back onto I-93 NB will only have to weave with traffic heading for the Exit 1 NB Off ramp and then merge onto I-93 NB mainline just south of the Exit 1 NB On ramp traffic. The Exit 1 NB Off ramp will be a 2-lane off ramp transitioning and matching into the existing 3-lane section approaching Rockingham Boulevard. The Exit 1 NB On ramp will require total reconstruction and widening of the bridge over South Policy Street. A retaining wall will also be required along the east side of the ramp to minimize impacts to the wet areas and buildings at this location. Potential sound barriers are currently under investigation and may be required adjacent to the I-93 NB barrel between stations 1005+00 and 1042+50, RT (approximately 4,000 ft along the Haigh Avenue/Azarian Drive neighborhood areas) and along the Exit 1 NB Off ramp (approximately 2000 ft along the McLarnon Road / MacGregor Street neighborhoods).

MA line to Exit 1 - SB

In the SB direction, north of Exit 1, the inside edge is being held near NH 38 and then transitioning to the inside while trying to match the outside edge in close to the existing SB ramp locations to reduce wetland impacts in the vicinity of the SB ramps. There are 2 options for the SB ramps. One option is to hold the existing ramp geometry and reconstruct the bridges as necessary to gain proper vertical clearance. A second option would provide an improvement to the existing geometry and reconstruct the ramps on new location, further to the west. A 2-lane SB On ramp would transition down to one auxiliary lane and then merge with the proposed 4-lane section on the SB mainline. The fourth lane would then carry into Massachusetts and transition out beginning at the nose of the Route 213 SB off-ramp and ending just north of the existing mainline bridge.

Cross Street

There are three options for Cross Street. One option would be to construct a new bridge on the existing alignment, which would require constructing a temporary bridge. A second option would be to construct a new bridge on new location, just north of the existing bridge. This option would not require construction of a detour bridge, but would have more difficult impacts to residential properties. A third option would be to construct a new bridge further to the north utilizing a smooth curve alignment. This option does not involve a detour bridge, but has still more difficult impacts to residential properties.

Rail Line

Should the potential future rail line tie into the existing Manchester to Lawrence line east of I-93, as the line approaches I-93 it would cross over I-93 and parallel the SB barrel to the west. The rail line would then cross over Cross Street and continue to parallel the SB ramps before crossing over the I-93 NB barrel and NH 38 before aligning, within the median, with the NB barrel north of NH 38. From this point forward, through Exit 2, the rail line would remain within the median.

Exit 1 to Exit 2 - NB

The NB barrel is being raised approximately 2 feet higher over NH 38 (Lowell Road) to provide for proper clearance. The bridge abutments will be constructed far enough back to accommodate a future 5-lane section for NH 38 (Lowell Road). The inside edge is being held with widening to the east to minimize impacts to Porcupine Brook. The rail would likely be constructed on structure through the Porcupine Brook area to minimize impacts. A retaining wall is proposed to maintain Woodland Terrace and the access it provides to abutting properties. A potential soundwall is being investigated for this area to minimize impacts to homes along Trolley Lane as well.

The Exit 2 NB ramps would continue to have a similar diamond type configuration as exists today. The NB On ramp is being evaluated for a truck climbing lane due to the long steep grade in this area. A longer merging area and truck lane may be more appropriate to allow trucks to come up to proper speed before merging with NB mainline traffic.

Exit 1 to Exit 2 - SB

The SB barrel is being raised approximately 2 feet higher over NH 38 (Lowell Road) to provide for proper clearance similar to the NB barrel. The bridge abutments will be constructed far enough back to accommodate a future 5-lane section for NH 38 (Lowell Road). The inside edge is also being held through this area with widening to the west to minimize impacts to the Porcupine Brook area. The SB ramps have two options. One option will construct a new diamond configuration, similar to the NB ramps. A second option would provide a WB Pelham Road to I-93 SB loop ramp configuration, which would merge with EB Pelham Road to I-93 SB on ramp traffic. SB On ramp vehicles would then merge down to one lane before merging with the I-93 SB mainline traffic. The major difference between the two configurations is that the loop option eliminates one traffic signal through the interchange area and would require a double left-turn onto Keewaydin Drive. With either option, a retaining wall would need to be constructed along the SB Off ramp to minimize impacts to adjacent parcels.

Pelham Road

Pelham Road will be widened to a 5-lane section. Current plans under development by the Town of Salem propose a 4-lane section through this area. Traffic signals for the Diamond option will be required at the following Pelham Road intersections: Manor Parkway/Stiles Road, Keewaydin Drive, SB ramps, NB ramps, and South Policy Street. As mentioned previously, the Loop option will eliminate one signal by intersecting the SB Off ramp with Keewaydin Drive. This option would also require the addition of a double left-turn lane on Pelham Road to access Keewaydin Drive. A 5-ft sidewalk is proposed along the south side of Pelham Road through this area. Two 5-ft shoulders are proposed to accommodate bicycle traffic.

Questions and Answers:

Comment: What is the difference between the three lanes and the four lanes?

Tony Grande: The difference between the three-lane section and the four-lane section is that the highway has been narrowed by one lane. One lane has been removed in each

direction, so the impacts are somewhat less than those associated with the four-lane section.

Comment: In the meetings held in Salem in the past, the plans continued up past the Brookdale Bridge overpass of I-93. Why do the plans not extend to include all of Salem to show how the I-93 widening would impact all of Salem?

Tony Grande: The project includes 18 miles of highway that have been split into four segments. At this time the design has only been developed through the Exit 2 area. The section to the north is currently being worked on and will carry up through Exit 3 to the North Lowell Road area beyond the weigh station. This section will be discussed at the next meeting.

Comment: At future meetings plans should be plotted to show the entire segment within the Town so all the residents can be informed and allowed to provide input on the entire town.

Comment: Will the lane and shoulders be the same width as exists today?

Tony Grande: The lanes will be the same width, 12 feet. Both the inside and the outside shoulders will be increased to 12 feet. Today they are 4 feet for the inside and 10 feet for the outside shoulder.

Comment: Will there be any additional improvements or widening along South Policy Street to accommodate the increased volume due to the park and ride lot at Exit 2?

Tony Grande: For the entire corridor, we are currently looking at how the park and ride lots will affect traffic along the connecting roadways, including South Policy Road.

Comment: Would that be the NHDOT's responsibility to make the necessary improvements to South Policy Road?

Jeff Brillhart: As part of the design process, the Department will evaluate the implications for the secondary roadways relative to interchange improvements and park and ride lots, and provide for the necessary improvements. In the case of Pelham Road and South Policy Street, the intersections will be looked at, but to what degree the intersection will be reconstructed remains to be seen given the shortcomings of the north leg of the intersection.

Comment: For the park and ride lot, it appears that there is a new access road proposed. Is this to be the only entrance and exit for the park and ride? I live on Fairmount Road to the north and I am wondering how much traffic will be on existing Fairmount Road.

Tony Grande: A new access road is proposed primarily to provide access for the park and ride lot. Fairmount Road would most likely be dead-ended before the park and ride lot, so it would serve only the properties located along it. However the design has not been finalized. There are a number of issues that need to be reviewed including traffic volumes, a recent development, wetlands, and potentially historic resources.

- Comment: Will the Windham meeting address what is proposed for the Exit 2 park and ride lot in more detail?
- Jeff Brillhart: The issues raised at these meetings will be considered as the designs are refined. The emphasis is to provide design for the section to the north. If it's possible, answers to questions raised tonight will be available at the Windham meeting or other future meetings in Derry, Londonderry, and Manchester.
- Comment: North of Exit 2, the highway comes very close to Canobie Lake and there are houses very close to the existing highway at Canobie Lake. Are there plans for sound barriers in this area?
- Tony Grande: The location and needs for potential sound barriers are currently being looked at for this area.
- Comment: In Windham bordering right on the Salem line is a new housing development where the houses are almost as close to I-93 as the houses are on Canobie Lake. In addition to the rail option down the I-93 corridor, is there still the option of utilizing the existing Manchester to Lawrence (M&L) rail corridor?
- Jeff Brillhart: The M&L rail corridor is an option for bringing back rail service to this area. Which rail corridor will eventually be utilized remains to be seen and will be dependent on some future rail study, done independently of this study for widening I-93.
- Comment: Why would motorists bother to use the collector-distributor road to the rest area when they can go right by it and get to Exit 1 north of it?
- Tony Grande: The design includes a median divider between the collector-distributor and the NB mainline, so all traffic wishing to exit to the rest area or to the Exit 1 NB off ramp, must use the collector-distributor.
- Comment: Is that similar to the Lowell collector-distributor in Massachusetts?
- Tony Grande: Yes, that is a similar design.
- Tom Campbell: As a member of the Salem Conservation Commission, as far as Exit 1 SB ramps are concerned, I would prefer to have the current configuration remain, rather than having the SB ramps relocated to the west and into existing wetlands.
- As far as Exit 2 is concerned, although it would result in one additional traffic light, I prefer the SB diamond interchange ramp concept as there would be less wetland impacts. Minimizing impacts to wetlands will help minimize potential increases in flooding.
- Regarding the NB truck lane/climbing lane at Exit 2, I support such a lane. I drive a truck for a living and it is real tough coming off that ramp.
- Comment: Can you explain again what is proposed at Cross Street?

- Tony Grande: One option is to reconstruct the existing bridge on existing location. That would require construction of a temporary detour bridge to maintain traffic while the existing bridge is removed and replaced with a longer span bridge. Another option is to utilize the existing roadway during construction and, just north of the existing bridge, construct a new bridge along with new roadway approaches to connect the new bridge back to existing Cross Street. This off-line concept has two options to the north of the existing bridge; one using a curved bridge and the other a straight bridge.
- Jeff Towne: How many buildings are affected by the off-line options at Cross Street?
- Tony Grande: In terms of property impacts, the two off-line options are basically the same. The extent of property impacts is also somewhat dependant on how much right-of-way will be purchased for the potential future rail line. Essentially, there are two structures impacted. One building on the east side of Cross Street is very close to the road and the property across the street is impacted, but the building could probably remain.
- Jeff Towne: In addition to those properties, is the only other property with a structure impacted, the industrial building just south of Exit 2 NB off ramp?
- Tony Grande: There are properties adjacent to NH 38, Pelham Road near Stiles Road and Keewaydin Drive, and the properties on the east side of I-93 near Porcupine Brook that may be impacted. Some of these impacts can be eliminated or minimized with the construction of retaining walls. The red dashed lines show the retaining walls on the plans. There are also impacts associated with the development of the park and ride lot at Exit 2.
- Comment: I am disappointed that this is a Salem meeting and not all of Salem was shown on the plans. Those of us on Canobie Lake have issues that we want to address. Also, how will the Scudder Investment property be impacted?
- Jeff Brillhart: I understand your dismay at not having your section of I-93 presented and we will look to not let this situation happen again. We are meeting in Windham next month and everything that is not shown here for Salem will be shown at that meeting.
- Comment: Relative to Pelham Road, are you going to completely rebuild that whole road including North and South Policy Streets, as well as continuing down Main Street?
- Bruce Tasker: The work shown to take place on Pelham Road east of I-93 represents the maximum amount of construction and the greatest amount of impact. We need to have a five lane section along Pelham Road; two through lanes in each direction with left turn lanes. What we have shown here is the addition a median island which does not exist today. We are also showing sidewalks and 5' shoulders and right turn lanes, if necessary. We tried to develop the worst case impact.
- Cliff Sinnott: Has the Department included in its evaluation the expansion of the Cisco complex and how that might effect South Policy Street or Pelham Road?

- Bruce Tasker: That complex is not directly in the model, but it is included as part of the overall development and future growth in the statewide model. We would have to evaluate that impact separately.
- Comment: Are the existing and the proposed drainage structures and facilities shown on these plans?
- Tony Grande: The proposed structures are not shown on these plans. The existing structures (major culverts) and bridges are shown. Preliminary conceptual layouts for proposed drainage layouts and treatment areas will be developed throughout the corridor. Those layouts may result in additional impacts to the property owners.
- Comment: At the earlier meetings, it was noted that flooding takes place in certain areas of Salem. Will all these added lanes further exacerbate the flooding problem in those areas.
- Jeff Brillhart: As the design progresses the impacts to flood plains will be evaluated and measures to mitigate these impacts proposed. Off-setting the flood plain impacts may result in additional impacts to private property.
- Comment: When do you expect the secondary impacts study to be finished?
- Jeff Brillhart: The Consultant charged with evaluating secondary impacts is scheduled to begin work immediately. Their first task is to identify the size of the study area and what questions to ask the expert panel. We also need to determine who will be on the panel. They need to proceed fairly quickly. I hope to have a booklet for the panel put together in about 2 ½ months that will have the data which will be considered by the panel. Once we have this ground work completed, we will hold public meetings to present the panel to the public and let everybody know what the questions are and what information has been given to the panel.
- Comment: Will you take any public input as to the proposed things that might be impacted?
- Jeff Brillhart: As I understand it, there will be public meetings where the public can ask questions, make suggestions, etc., and at the end, when the panel is finished with their work, there will be another public meeting.
- Comment: Will you be advertising the public meetings in the newspaper?
- Jeff Brillhart: Yes. You can also contact me directly.
- Comment: Regarding the park and ride, there are wetlands in that area. I am getting more flood water in my basement than I used to and I'm afraid that when they build the park and ride, I am really going to get flooded.
- Bruce Tasker: When the concept was developed, we noted that there were wetlands in the area of the Park and Ride lot. The concept tries to avoid the wetlands although some impact may be unavoidable. Any additional paved areas will require some type of treatment and detention basins so as to keep the runoff rate the same as exists today. This all has to be evaluated as part of the DEIS. The plan is only a concept at this time.

- Comment: Relative to the southern end of the rail line shown for the I-93 corridor, have you looked at the option that continues the rail line down the I-93 corridor in Massachusetts? That was unresolved the last time we talked about it.
- Jeff Brillhart: The plans developed for widening I-93 allow for rail to extend to Lawrence or continue down I-93 to Woburn. Further study of rail options needs to take place with Massachusetts being involved.